STONE FIRE-PLACE AT GASDEN OLD MANOR-HOUSE, NEAR MALMSBURY, WILTS.

The fire-place represented on the adjoining page, is in my opinion, a much better example of the architecture of James I. than either of those from Hickes's Hall* or Boston House.† This is in the great chamber of the old manor-house at Gasden, in Wilts, situated near the picturesque village of Charlton, and is entirely of stone.

The building, which is now occupied as a farm-house, contains little else worth notice, excepting one or two good ceilings, and some very rich iron turn-buckles to the lead casements. I have not been able to meet with any history of the building, neither can I get much information respecting the shield of arms in the centre of the fire-place; it appears to contain the arms of Oldgrave or Owlgrave, and Colt (the latter was a Wilts family); the former bore azure, a fess engrailed between three owls argent; Colt bears argent, a fess azure, between three horses courant sable. These are apparently the arms, but the pedigree shews no connection between them. It must remain conjectural as to whom the shield belonged.

C. J. Richardson.

THE PARISH OF CHELSEA, AND THE METROPOLITAN IMPROVEMENT COMMISSIONERS.

The inhabitants of St. Luke's, Chelsea, have addressed a memorial to the Improvement Commissioners to the following effect; we hope the example will not be lost sight of by other parishes:—

"That, looking upon London as the centre of the monied world, and, as a necessary consequence, the place where the business of the United Kingdom, its colonies, and dependencies, and the business of the whole world, to a great extent, must be concentrated; viewing it also as the seat of Government, the focus of literature, art, and science, it is obvious that it must, with its present extraordinary and daily increasing facilities of communication, go on attracting larger and larger numbers to it from all parts of the world.

That successive governments, foreseeing this, and bearing in mind the increase of traffic which must necessarily spring from it, have, with a wise forethought, which is greatly to be admired, done all in their power to improve the leading thoroughfares of the metropolis by widening them where practicable, and making more direct communications, and opening up new ones, where required.

That by these means the city and the approaches to it from all parts, have been improved to an extent which would have been deemed impracticable half a century ago.

That, notwithstanding these great improvements, however, it is obvious greater facilities of communication will soon be required; and since little more can be effected in the formation of *new lines of thoroughfare* than is now being effected, or about to be effected, the question naturally arises, what other arrangements can be made to meet the expected increase of traffic?

That, in the opinion of your memorialists, there is no other mode of making this provision but by rendering the river Thames, which runs through the very heart of the metropolis, more available for steam-boat traffic.

That, considering the wonderful increase of traffic by these boats of late years, and the advantages they hold out in point of cheapness, celerity, and comfort to the passengers, there is little doubt they would become the common means of transit to all persons residing along the densely-crowded shores of our river, provided proper stations were made at convenient spots along its banks, and proper accommodation were provided at them for passengers whilst waiting for embarkation.

That by this mode it appears to your memorialists, provision might easily be made for an increase of traffic to any conceivable extent, not only to the great relief of the main thoroughfares from the vehicles that would otherwise be crowded therein, but the great advantage of the public.

That, important as this provision for the growing traffic of the metropolis would be, commercially considered, there is another point of view in which it would be of equal, if not greater, importance; viz. as a means of cheap and ready conveyance to the large multitudes of the working population who reside in the densely-crowded neighbourhoods on both sides of the Thames, to open spots on the banks of the river beyond the metropolis, which might now be easily secured, for their exercise and healthful recreation.

That, considering the rapid rate at which the suburbs of the metropolis are extending in all directions, and the distance people must consequently travel from the centre of the metropolis, through crowded thoroughfares, before they can reach the open country for air and exercise,—the importance of providing larger open spaces on the banks of the Thames as places of resort to the working classes, cannot possibly be overrated.

That, under this impression, your memorialists have heard with great delight the intention of her Majesty's commissioners to recommend an embankment of the Thames, so as to form a handsome road from Vauxhall-bridge to Battersea-bridge, considering as they do, that such embankment, with a broad and handsome foot and carriage way attached to it, would not only be one of the greatest ornaments of the metropolis, but a great advantage to all classes therein, and in particular to the working classes before referred to.

That to make such embankment, however, of the greatest public utility, your memorialists humbly submit that the means of continuing it onward to Fulham ought at once to be secured, if not rendered immediately available. They would, therefore, strongly urge upon your honourable Board the necessity of purchasing a belt of land along the banks of the river, of a sufficient breadth for carrying out the three following purposes:—1st. The formation of ornamental walks next the river, for the use of the myriads of *working* people, who would avail themselves of the convenience and cheapness of steam-boat transit, to enjoy the pure air and delightful scenery that would be thus afforded them. 2nd. The construction of a handsome carriage-drive from Chelsea to Fulham, for the use of the upper classes. And 3rd. The erection of a series of villas along that line of road, the sites of which would, in the opinion of your memorialists, sell for more than would pay the whole expense of the purchase of the land in its present state, and the formation of the embankment.

That if this noble undertaking were carried out in the style in which the Government has hitherto been accustomed to carry out its plans, your memorialists confidently believe that it would excel in real utility and beauty of design, any thing which has yet been accomplished in any city in Europe.

That your memorialists, besides forming part of the community to be benefited by the admirable work, conceive they have an especial claim to urge its execution, inasmuch as they are inhabitants of a parish containing a population of upwards of 45,000 persons, who have been paying for many years the extra duty of 8d. per ton upon all coals brought into London, and have thereby contributed towards the carrying out the improvements in other parts of the metropolis, while they have as yet derived no advantage from any improvement effected in their own locality.

That your memorialists, contemplating the improvement which would be effected by the embankment upon a part of their parish, have been induced to seek the aid of the legislature, for the purpose of effecting improvements in other parts of the parish at their own expense, and a bill for that purpose is now before Parliament.

That as a parish in the vicinity of the royal palace, struggling to emancipate itself from the very degraded position in which it has been left for many years, your memorialists confidently look forwards to the embankment as a work that would have a greater effect in stimulating improvement in their neighbourhood, and raising it in the scale of metropolitan districts, than any thing else that could be devised.

For these reasons, therefore, your memorialists earnestly entreat your honourable Board that you would be pleased to use your best exertions to cause the embankment of the Thames, from Vauxhall-bridge to Battersea-bridge, on the Middlesex side, to be carried out with the least possible delay, and also to insure the continuation of the same onward to Fulham in the mode above referred to as soon as practicable.

And your memorialists will ever pray, &c."

* See page 562, vol. ii.
† See page 370, vol. ii.

LAYING OUT STREETS AND ALLEYS.

Sir,—I will further intrude on your columns upon the remaining question in the circular of the official referees concerning streets, quoted in your leading article of the 25th January. Upon this point the opinion of the referees is thus given:—"Streets formed after the *passing of the Act* must be *built* in conformity with the provisions of the Metropolitan Buildings Act, see section 52, and that the mere setting or laying out will not be sufficient to take them out of the Act." Feeling that in some cases this might press hardly, they say, "If parties are prejudiced by the enactment, they must seek relief under the 9th or 10th sections." Did this proposed relief exist, it would be but an appeal to them from their own previous decision, expressed by sanctioning the issuing of a summons; but by some oversight they have quoted sections that have literally nothing to do with the matter; these sections referring exclusively to parties who have entered into agreements by which they were permitted to form streets and alleys of a dimension and form prescribed by the Act, to assess the amount of damage they sustain as against their landlord; and consequently can have no effect in relation to parties having laid out such streets on their own land, or under an agreement or lease where no such operation formed part of the consideratinn.

To make the matter intelligible, it may be well to state, the date of the *passing of the Act* was 9th August, 1844, set up by the dictum of the referees *terms* 1st January, 1845. I am aware of the difficulty of proving a negative, but their assumption of a particular date (the passing of the Act) would tend affirmatively to prove that in their opinion streets formed previous to that period might be built upon; and for the term "built" I thank them very much.

I object to the substitution of the 9th August for the 1st January, for this reason: the public had permission given them to do certain acts before 1st of January, amongst others, by section 2, under the head "Hereafter to be built," we find "to apply to all streets or alleys not laid out before the said 1st day of January, or which, being laid out, shall not be rendered fit for use within twelve months thereafter." Here is a positive enactment, in my opinion, not at all controlled by section 52, which, being uncertain, would not be permitted to over-ride such positive permission. It is stated in section 52, "Be it enacted with regard to such streets and other ways hereafter formed, so far as relates to securing a sufficient width thereof." I contend this precedent paragraph, by the word "hereafter," applies to section 2, "already built," as above quoted, and then comes "That from the passing of this Act all the conditions, regulations, and directions contained in the schedule (1) to this Act annexed shall be duly observed and performed;" here is at least contradiction against previous, positive, and intelligible permission.

This brings us to the discussion in what way such streets or alleys laid out before the 9th August, or 1st January (as the case may be decided), may be built upon. It is quite clear that parties may now, as heretofore, at any time lay out streets or alleys, of what form and size they please, provided no attempt is made to build upon those not in accordance with the Act. The referees have negatively admitted that such streets and alleys may be "built" without reference to the new Act, if formed (as they state) previous to the passing of the Act. As practical men, they saw, being under the head "already built," it implied erections to be put thereon, and not the mere forming the street; this will remove a world of doubt as to what a "commencement" is. It appears to me evident that any party having so laid out a street or alley before 1st January, and completing the same within twelve months, may cover it with buildings perfectly irrespective of the new Act.

In your leading article of 25th January,

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